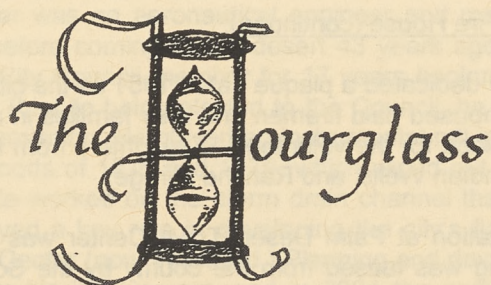


Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77

Palm Desert, CA 92261

(760) 346-6588



Community

Service

Collections

Archives

SPRING/SUMMER 2010

VOL. 17, NO. 1

Historical Society / Historic Fire House

History compiled from HSPD archives

by V. Folkers, Curator

Early 1948 - An abandoned real estate office served as a fire station (which is now the east Presidential Plaza parking lot.) The apparatus room was one-half block south in a construction shed; it was used only during the nights to store the fire engine. The first fire truck, which Kay Olesen sold to the county for \$500, was war surplus. Fires were fought by the Volunteer Fire Department Organization under Art Fields' leadership. A gala festival was held annually at Shadow Mountain Club which served as a benefit to cover expenses for the group. It was a valuable asset to the fledgling community and residents showed their appreciation.

April 22, 1951 - Clifford W. Henderson, representing Palm Desert Corporation, deeded a section of land to the County of Riverside for the purpose of constructing a fire station. The lot was 100 feet wide by 150 feet deep and was fronting on El Paseo. Mr. Holland, the State Fire Warden for the district, secured a quantity of cement blocks from the County Prison Farm brick yard. Also, he included in his budget enough money (\$6,500) to complete the structure. The labor was free, as it was erected by firemen during working hours.

Nov. 1951 - Upon completion, it was the only building west of Hwy. 74 and south to where Haystack is now. It was occupied by the Riverside County Fire Department for almost 32 years. The fire station is a one-story structure built in two sections, one on each side of the fire truck storage area or garage. The east wing consists of a living or office room area, three bedrooms, one bath, dining room and kitchen. It was considered a residence because a fireman and his family lived in this section during the 1950s and early 1960s. The west wing provided office and bathroom and equipment storage space.



Dec. 1977 - The Historical Society of Palm Desert was first conceived at an informal luncheon meeting at Shadow Mountain Club. June 1978 - The first draft of by-laws was written. The city, with Mayor Ed Mullins leading the way, appointed an historical commission consisting of high-profile pioneers who would be known as Trustees. These five people would serve terms in perpetuity: Hal Kapp, Ann Carpenter, Patricia Anderson, Evelyn Young, and Jeannette Constantino. Nov. 17, 1978 - The organization was officially incorporated.

At first they were given a desk at the Prickly Pear location that was being used as city hall. Later they rented office space in the Hal Kapp building till it was sold, so the Society had to move out and was homeless for many months. Everything they had collected up to that point had to be put into storage. This historic material included everything Hal Kapp, a realtor and community activist, had saved during his lifetime.

Fall 1981 - There was some thinking that a name change of the organization might be advisable. The "Historical Society of the Cove Communities" was suggested, taking in the communities of Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells - but this suggestion never materialized.

Historical Society / Historic Fire House (continued):

March 3, 1983 - The Society dedicated a plaque dated 1951 as the city's first fire station in a ceremony held in front of the building. The station housed paid firemen and their families in addition to being shelter for all fire equipment in the area and a meeting place for the volunteers. Firefighters from the station protected all the cities in the Cove Community: Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and Rancho Mirage.

Fall 1983 - The new fire station at Palm Desert Town Center was finished, and so the historic fire house was vacated. 1985 - The building was leased from the county by the Society, and they were able to move into it in January. During this time frame, vandals broke into the building, and some of the valuable memorabilia was destroyed. Winter 1983 - Boy Scout Troop 76 used the facility up until January 1987. An arrangement was made to let the scouts use part of the premises after the Society moved in, but that didn't work out.

May 15, 1985 - This date was chosen for the Society to officially take ownership of the historic building because that was the month and day in 1946 when Cliff Henderson broke ground for the community of Palm Desert on the south side of Highway 111. September 1986 - The City of Palm Desert appropriated \$27,878 out of their budget to make improvements to the historic building.

1980s - A basic registration system was formed for collections of historical documents, but no official archive was initiated until ten years later. However, in 1981 the Society was recruited by the county to help do a survey of architectural features of historic buildings in the valley. Also, an oral archive was started in which many pioneers were interviewed and the tapes transcribed.

January 2, 1990 - At a Board meeting the Society Trustees, on the recommendation of their attorney, resolved to deed the fire house over to the city. This was done with the understanding that the Society would continue to occupy the building. This transaction was reported to the public in July, along with plans to renovate the structure by early fall.

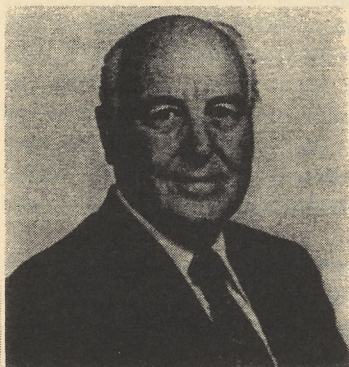
1991 - It was under the leadership of Ed Mullins that the reorganization of the Society took place. In November a wish list was published to get the historic fire house furnished for Society use. 1992 - A draft of agreement with the city to lease the fire house to the Society was written. An office manager/secretary was hired as a part time employee. June 24, 1992 - A new Board of Directors was installed, tasks were assigned, and many projects were set into motion. Since that time goals have been reached through the loyalty of members who volunteer many hours to this community outreach, and through the on-going support of the City of Palm Desert. 1992-94 - The Society was opened to the public (members, citizens, and visitors) on a regular basis. Free Polaroid photos of children with the antique fire truck was a popular feature.

1996 - The city financed the repainting of the building, electrical work, sprinkler system, masonry work, etc. Beautiful draught-tolerant landscaping was installed in the front of the building, giving the place a whole new look and excellent curb appeal. The City of Palm Desert installed a piece of art at the front porch of the historic fire house. It was the now-famous statue of a boy and his dog in a tug-of-war, which was stolen from its place on El Paseo a couple of years prior. "One on One" was found and placed on the Society site.

2002 - Society did a major renovation of the inside of the bay (center section) of the historic fire house. A glass storefront was installed behind the pull-down door, and the room was set up to exhibit a major firefighting display.

The Society has inviting activities which serve the people of Palm Desert, many of them on an annual basis. Each year we sponsor Mini-Muster, a fire safety program for third graders (having finished its 17th year this past October); school tours for second graders; Founder's Day; Golf Cart Parade entry; annual Fall yard sale; Spring & Fall Luncheons; and Ed Mullins Memorial Picnic. We also provide a history-rich newsletter, sell historic photos, provide speakers, workshops, tours, receptions, open house, mixers, book signings, etc.

The preservation of Palm Desert's history is our main focus, and our archive contains over 65,000 documents as of November 2009. Our general collection is designated as "PD" and covers Palm Desert local history from the early 1900s through 2009. The "CWH" collection covers Clifford W. Henderson's life and his role in the development of Palm Desert. "HSPD" is the title of the Historical Society collection. Yet to be initiated will be the "RH" collection, data for which will be copied from his original materials.



Walter Snyder was an aeronautical engineer and marketing director for Lockheed Corporation before coming to the desert 43 years ago. A local politician, he was a Palm Desert City Council member for 17 years beginning in 1980; he passed away on March 14. Prior to being elected to the Council, he served for three years on the Planning Commission. He played an instrumental roll in helping the city recover from devastating floods of 1976 and 1979, which wiped out much of the south end of the community. He worked on the storm drain channel that was built after the flooding. Walt also played a key role in developing the city's first shopping mall called Palm Desert Town Center (now Westfield.) Planning and development of Civic Center Park benefited from his involvement, and in 2004 the park's picturesque waterway was named the "Walter H. Snyder Lagoon" in his honor.

A March 96 article in the Palm Desert Post indicated that Walt had not forgotten his love of the world of flight. He no longer piloted a plane, but he spent lots of time at Thermal Airport. As chairman of the Joint Powers Authority he hoped to develop the airport to be able to serve to its full potential by bringing in cargo and charter planes. At his retirement luncheon Jim Battin said, "He is the nicest guy I've ever met. He lights up when he talks about Palm Desert." Sheila Gilligan had this to say about Walt Snyder, "The first word that comes to mind in describing him is 'gentleman'. He is incredibly dedicated and committed to making this community very special." A memorial service was held at Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church on March 10 at 2:00 p.m.



Ginny Mullins was a loyal member of the Society and is considered one of our foremost pioneers. She was born on August 31, 1929 to Reuben and Juanita Lopez in Hollywood. After finishing high school, she attended Los Angeles Community College. She met Nick Licari and during their 25-year marriage they had five sons. In 1966-67 she was named "Mrs. Chamber of Commerce" in La Marada and "Miss Hospitality" of Alpha Beta.

When she moved to the desert, Ginny took a position as a bookkeeper and checker for Dee Smith of Smith's Food King; during her life she worked in the grocery industry for 40 years. Her pretty face and warm personality attracted Ed Mullins, who owned Mullin's Pharmacy and was extremely active in the community. In fact, he was the City's mayor. They dated, married, and had ten happy years before Ed died on April 26, 1997.

Ginny was no stranger to volunteer work, having helped out at Martha's Kitchen and following that she gave one day a week to the Betty Ford Center. She attended Sacred Heart Church in Palm Desert. From the time Ed took on the project of reviving the Historical Society after a down-hill slide, she could be found cleaning and doing the most menial tasks at the historic fire house. Then she agreed to become the chairman of the Membership Committee. A memorial gift to the Society in her name will be very much appreciated.

Ginny Mullins is survived by six sons and a daughter, eighteen grandchildren and six great grandchildren. She was the ultimate "Grandma" and these little ones were the light of her life. She was the kind of loving person everyone remembers.



Nancy Anne O'Hara was born on July 1, 1921 and died on February 16, 2010. While in the desert she resided at Marrakesh Country Club. Her occupations included interior designer and realtor. She joined the Society membership rolls through the encouragement of Helli Harrison who is a long-time valued member.

She enjoyed world travel, fine dining and shopping. Most important to her were her faith in God and the company of her beloved family and friends. Nancy is survived by two daughters, seven grandchildren, and seventeen great-grandchildren.



NEW MEMBERS

Business: Ken Williamson
Family: Kevin & Diane Stewart
Tom & Christie Accatino

Individual: Carole Herrera
Elaine Mathews
Jean Burns

Mary Brennecke
Carol McDaniel

White Sun Guest Ranch
HE WAS KING OF THE RANCH

A poem about a Dalmatian puppy by Rachel Burrus - January 23, 1970

Much pleasure he gave us, that little spotted pup.
He rode in the saddle, when the walking got tuff;
But just a few days, on the same old trail,
He was chasing the rabbits or maybe a quail.
First we wondered, would there be spots to go round,
When that little old pup, grew to be a big hound.

He untied the shoe laces, of the little guest;
Brought joy to the hearts of all the rest.
And looking so big, sitting up in the truck,
I believe he could'a driven, had the driving got rough.
I look out each evening; here came my boys,
Tired from riding the desert, and doing their chores.

Now we have no more Pepper, no spotted pup.
Brings tears to our eyes, so hard giving him up.
Yes, "He was King of the Ranch" all could plainly see,
Where you found Ed, there Pepper would be.
But when God made a Heaven, for you and I,
He made a place for Pepper up in the sky.

....And the Story

It was the night before Thanksgiving when our little Dalmatian pup was delivered to us. Ed, my husband, had answered an ad and agreed to buy him over the phone. He was one of a litter of eleven. We couldn't have picked a prettier one. He weighed seven pounds and was nine weeks old. The door bell rang and there was our little spotted puppy. Reaching out for him without fear, he cuddled so close to me and also found a place in my heart.

That night we made a bed for him out of a box. And as could be expected, we had a noisy doggy and a sleepless night. The next night we solved our problem. He slept soundly on the porch with an electric blanket turned low wrapped around him with one of my old shoes, one of Ed's dirty shirts and a clock. We had heard that these things make a dog feel more at home. He also acquired a name, Pepper.

Ed was employed as wrangler at a guest ranch and we were anxious to show our new found friend. Did he steal the show!! All the guests thought he was the cutest puppy ever, and from the beginning he loved and was loved by all.

Within a week Ed was taking him in the afternoons. At feeding time Pepper would stay close as Ed hauled the bails of hay for the night feeding. After a couple of days he began to jump on the cart for a ride back to the hay stack. Yes, he was a cute puppy! In a short time not only was he playing by untying the guests' shoes, but he was going with Ed on the trail rides. At first, his little legs were just too short for such a long journey, but he would stay close by Ed's horse. Then as he tired, Ed would put him in the saddle and bring him in. Soon our little pup was getting to be so big. We wondered if there would be enough spots to go around when he grew to be a big hound. He was not only going on all the rides, but was chasing birds and rabbits. By this time he was sitting up in the truck with his little head peeping just over the steering wheel.

At Christmas he could sit and stay. We got some cute pictures of him sitting under the Christmas tree. One time he was sitting in front of a box with a yellow bow. The bow appeared to be sitting on top of his head. Yellow with black spots made a beautiful picture.

In spring the ranch closed. We moved to Yosemite National park for our summer job. We wondered what he would do when he saw his first bear. In our one-room cabin, Pepper was asleep on a saddle blanket by a window. We heard a "yip" and under our bed he came, hitting his back on the old-fashioned high iron bed frame. Then we heard the pat, pat, pat of the feet of a large bear passing by. We laughed at our brave pup. Early morning he was still under the bed. He grew braver during the nearly four months that we lived there. We needed to keep him tied up or watch him closely. If a bear came by, he would chase him up a tree, which was against the rules of the park. Bears learned to stay away from our cabin.

(The story of a Dalmatian puppy - continued)

We remembered so many cute things he did that summer. Being at an altitude of 8000 feet, the nights were quite cold. We made him a wooden frame bed which we brought in at night. We put his blanket on the floor and covered him with an old drape. In the afternoon he would start dragging his drape off the clothes line toward the cabin. Then we would put him to bed, leaving his head out until the cabin cooled off. We had only a little cook stove in which we burned wood. He looked so much like a baby in a bassinette. As the cabin would cool off, and cool it would get, he would awaken us to be covered more. There he would stay until Ed fixed the stove and the cabin would be warm. We could see him bobbing around, but he wouldn't as much as stick his head out while it was cold.

At the ranch Pepper took long walks with me in a back pasture, hitting all the water holes like a duck and digging around for field mice. I would hike on three different trails. He would run ahead of me and stop when he came to a change in the paths, waiting to see which one I would take that day. Each path brought me to a higher field, enclosed by beautiful pine trees. There I would rest on a fallen pine tree as he took a run through the trees. Each circle brought him near enough that he would stop to see if I was still waiting. When he was tired, he came and sat by me. Alone in the quietness we would rest. Outside of an occasional bird and the wind in the trees, it seemed like only God, Pepper, and I were there. Pepper would sit so still it seemed as if he felt the same. After the hike he was ready for home.

In October we were back on the desert for the ranch work. There Pepper was free to roam and was large enough to hold his own if a coyote crossed his path on the rides, which he took three times a day with the guests. One day he chased a rabbit and didn't come back to the horses. Evening came. Pepper hadn't been seen all afternoon. Ed came home with a worried look on his face....

Note: Kathy Birdwell resides in Mesa, Arizona. She tells us: My step-grandfather, Edward Burrus, had worked for 15 years at the White Sun Guest Ranch in Rancho Mirage and I was searching for information about him. In 1967 he married my grandmother, who wrote the story and poem about the Dalmatian puppy. While I visited the Historical Society, I purchased the two volumes of Helen Dengler's books and found pictures of Pepper and Grandpa Ed. While at the museum, I was helped by a very sweet volunteer by the name of Bonnie Bowie. Thank you for writing to us Kathy, we love and appreciate our volunteers too.

**VALERIE JEAN DATE SHOP
& THE CAHUILLA BASKET-MAKERS**

by Vlasta Radan / edited by V. Folkers

During the first decades of the 20th century, Native American women started mass producing baskets for the curio and souvenir trade. The Valerie Jean Date Shop in Thermal was one of the few examples of Cahuilla crafts being used in a larger economic enterprise.

In 1928 Russell Nicoll and his wife started a small roadside business selling dates. Over time they built up a considerable mail order business. The secret of success was stated by McKennery in a 1938 issue of Desert Magazine. Nicoll "would sell not only dates; he would sell the charm of a desert oasis, mix it with artful presentation of his wares, and throw in a measure of western color and hospitality." Sometimes, between the 1930s and 1950s, the date shop used Cahuilla baskets in the packaging of their dates. Though traditional materials were used in these baskets, the shape of the containers departed sharply from the traditional one.

In doing research on this subject Vlasta Radan asks: What was the business arrangement? Was it a cheap labor issue? How long did this relationship last? Were there other examples of Cahuillas using their skill in the larger American economy?

If you can respond to any of these questions with historic information, please contact:

Vlasta Radan (vlasta@ellerman.org)

or the Historical Society: Anne.hspd@verizon.net

DONATIONS

- Gloria Petitto
- Kathy Birdwell
- Vlasta Radan

- Jackie Damron

An article about the Petitto Family in "Coal People" dated April 1977.
A story, poem, and photo prints about the White Sun Guest Ranch.
A student at U.C.-Riverside who wrote a paper about how the Cahuilla basketmakers provided containers for dates to the Valerie Jean Date Shop.
Nine items for Religious Organizations in the archive; mostly they were for Palm Desert Community Church - the "Wayside Chapel."

DESERT WILDFLOWERS & CHILI POTLUCK

Doug Walker is a desert naturalist and Professor Emeritus - College of the Desert. He gave a lecture on Friday, Feb. 26 at the Portola Community Center. His armchair tour of the desert's vast array of wildflowers was shown in gorgeous color on slides in his collection. Most interesting was the way they were photographed, moving closer and closer to the blossoms so they were shown in great detail. Doug showed which plants had hair on the stems, etc.

Kim Housken organized a great chili-tasting, which preceded the lecture. There were about ten different versions of chili and corn bread muffins and cookies to go along with it. Also a decadent birthday cake celebrating Harry Quinn's birthday was added to the display of desserts. It was a fun, informal gathering.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ROCK ART

Because of inclement weather, Harry Quinn was unable to deliver the lecture. However, we did view many great slides and heard commentary by members of the audience who were quite knowledgeable. Jan Holmlund, who had just finished a study on rock art, provided much of the information for the program. Petroglyphs are cut into the rock by rubbing, pecking, or scratching; while pictographs are painted on the rock. Aside from the Mountain, Pass, and Desert Cahuilla Indians, there were ten different people groups and cultures that left their mark in the history of rock art in Southern California. Travertine Point has fish traps and fish pictographs. Other locations to view rock art are Coral Mountain, Corn Spring, Fox Trot, Idyllwild County Park, Strawberry Creek, Avery Canyon, Shamrock Cave, Sentinel Rock, Ramona's Cave, La Puerta caves, Davis Maze, Hemet Maze, and the new Hemet Maze. Though rock art is difficult to interpret, it is important that we preserve these sites and keep the Indian heritage safe.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - MEETING SUMMARY

Feb. 17 Meeting - John Marman reported on the Melissa Morgan Gallery Fund-raiser. Flyers and tickets for Board members to sell were distributed. The Society membership count is 290. Barbara Eastes & Madonna Marman would attend to Wildflower Festival at the Santa Rosa/San Jacinto Visitor Center on March 6. Kim Housken gave update on insurance costs for Home-Art Tour (and) reprinting "Painters of the Desert" by Ed Ainsworth. Three Board vacancies - Bev Bergh, Bob Pitchford, and Kermit Martin. President Eastes to check on selling Society items at COD Street Fair. Hal & Angie Rover & President Eastes attended Hoppy Book signing in Aliso Viejo on Jan. 30. Kim Housken reported two full sets of Desert Magazine less one issue. Hal Rover spoke of need for Society to accept credit card payments. A Founder's Day recipient was discussed.

Mar. 17 Meeting - Newsletter to be published three times a year with business card advertising to defray expenses.

RECEPTION AT MELISSA MORGAN ART GALLERY

To benefit Palm Desert Youth Education Programs

Organized by John Marman

This event was sponsored by Sister Cities, Palms to Pines Rotary and the Historical Society on Thursday, March 25 from 5:00--7:00 p.m. Raffle prizes included: 4-Night Stay & Breakfast at Dorado Pacifico in Ixtapa/Zihautanejo, Mexico, a remote-control Jeep, wine & picnic set, an original painting by Maria Hunt, and more; John Marzicola won the first prize. Attendees enjoyed finger foods and wine on the gallery's patio.

JACKRABBIT HOMESTEADING

Kim Stringfellow delivered the lecture on this interesting subject on March 26 at the Portola Community Center. She is an artist and educator residing in Joshua Tree. As an associate professor at San Diego State University she teaches multimedia and photography courses. "Greetings from the Salton Sea" was the first book she authored in 2005. Her second book was published just last year "Jackrabbit Homestead: Tracing the Small Tract Act in the Southern California Landscape, 1938--2008." A report on the homesteading book will appear in a future issue of this newsletter.

10th ANNUAL ED MULLINS MEMORIAL "Picnic in the Park"

4th Annual RED SHIRT SOCIETY Get-Together

This event functioned also as a membership meeting and installation of officers. It was held on Sunday - March 28 at Civic Center Park. Many thanks to Barbara & Warren Eastes, Gary Olesen, and Carole Cole for a delicious Keedy burger lunch; to Brett Romer for the public address system; to Dick Folkers for transporting table & supplies; and to all the loyal members who took care of the many details that spell success. Installation of Officers & Board was done by Dick Folkers as follows: Pres. Brett Romer, V-Pres. Eric Vogt, Treas. Madonna Marman, Sec. Bonnie Bowie, Im. Past Pres. Barbara K. Eastes; Board: Marcy Gregory, Louise Neeley, Harry Quinn, Adele Sandman, Don Graybill, Kim Housken, and John Marman.

DESERT ART & HOME TOUR
Saturday, April 24 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Plan to spend the day visiting four homes of local collectors of California and Western art: Hubbard home at Bighorn, Stewart home at the Movie Colony, Ambrose home at Las Palmas, and Hillery home in Indian Wells. Lunch at the Living Desert and a private tour of the Chase art collection there are included. See exceptional homes and art.....meet the collectors....learn about the strategy and thrills of collecting art.

Thom Gianetto, co-owner of Edenhurst Gallery in Palm Desert and Laguna Beach will be the guide on this bus tour. Space on the bus is limited to 46, so get your ticket early.

Cost: Members \$125 / Non-Members \$150 (includes membership in Historical Society of Palm Desert)
To reserve a seat, call the HSPD at (760) 346-6588 Proceeds benefit the H.S.P.D.

SENIOR INSPIRATION AWARDS
Ginny Folkers to be honored as Palm Desert's Recipient

For twenty years of volunteer service as the Curator for the Historical Society, Ginny Folkers has been chosen by the City of Palm Desert as this year's recipient. A celebration for her and 10 other awardees is planned for **Friday, April 23 at 11:00 a.m.** at an **Awards Luncheon** to be held at the **Renaissance Esmeralda Resort in Indian Wells**. All who wish to attend the luncheon may call **(760) 863-2556** for tickets at \$25 each.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

Mar. 27, Sat. thru Apr. 3	<u>Special Event:</u> "Plein Air Artists" Reception Coachella Valley Watercolor Society - volunteers needed	Historic Fire House
Apr. 12, 14, 16 Apr. 17	<u>Special Event :</u> "Painters of the Desert" Demonstration - Terry Masters	Historic Fire House 10am-3pm
Apr. 15, Thurs.	Imperial Dam & Joshua Tree Park Tour	
Apr. 23, Fri.	Senior Inspiration Award - recipient: Ginny Folkers For work as Curator on H.S. archives Tickets \$25, checks: DSFE/Senior Inspiration Awards	Renaissance Esmeralda 11 a.m.
Apr. 23, Fri.	"Coffee & Conversation" with Ginger Renner & Gary Fillmore "About Desert Magazine and Southwest Art Gallery Artists"	LG's Steak-house-P.D. 7:00 pm.
Apr. 24, Sat.	<u>Special Event:</u> Desertscape Home Tour (Art & Homes) Visit 5 locations in: Bighorn, the Movie Colony, Las Palmas, & Indian Wells Chase Collection & Lunch - Living Desert Tour Leader: Thom Gianetto, co-owner of Edenhurst Galleries Cost: Members \$125 / Non-members \$150 includes membership)	bus (limited= 9am-4pm 46 persons, when full we will start a waiting list)
May 15, Sat.	Founder's Day Award - recipient: Betty Crockett, Activities Director at Shadow Mountain Club for many years	City Hall 2pm-4pm Council Chambers
May 28, Fri.	<u>Lecture:</u> "Water in the Coachella Valley" - Bob Keeran Cost: \$5 per person	Portola Com. Cent. 7:00 pm
May 29, Sat.	Tentative museum closing date.	
Oct. - 1st week	Tentative museum re-opening.	

BETTY CROCKET TO RECEIVE FOUNDER'S DAY AWARD**Saturday - May 15, 2010 - 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.****Palm Desert City Hall Council Chambers**

It was early in the year 1956 when Betty visited Palm Desert with her high school friend Barbara and her mother. They were given guest passes to the Shadow Mountain Club and when she saw the figure-eight swimming pool she exclaims, "It was the most beautiful swimming pool I had ever seen." Lou Kuehner needed a lifeguard for the weekend, and since she was a water safety instructor, she helped out. A week after her visit 19-year-old Betty moved from her home in Los Angeles, was given a free place to live in an army barracks, a salary, and one meal a day. That was the beginning of eight years of employment with the Shadow Mountain Club, a much-advertised family social center in the young desert community. Six days a week she had to walk to work from where College of the Desert is presently located, and walking in the desert's heat was not fun. This was incentive to save up her money and she eventually purchased a two-seater MGB convertible.

After a time of serving as lifeguard at the pool, Betty advanced to the position of Recreational Director for approximately 200 children from ages 4 through 18. She says, "Those were the happiest times of my life." They were also the busiest, as she organized swim lessons and races, camp outs and bonfires, treks to Tahquitz Canyon, rides on sand dunes in a dune buggy, sports, hikes, set up movies in the evenings, produced Christmas plays, taught social graces, and put on teen dances. Discipline was rarely a problem, but if a youngster did get into trouble, the parents would phone her and apologize. The club was always sponsoring theme parties and so, in addition to the children's activities, Betty was constantly being sought out to help with and participate in these adult activities. Her pleasant personality and unbounded energy brought her into contact with many people, and they are still part of her life today. Plan to attend the annual Founder's Day ceremony...the public is invited, admittance is free and refreshments will be served. You will enjoy meeting Betty Crockett, an active participant in Palm Desert's local history.

Ginny Folkers, Curator & Editor

Historical Society of Palm Desert
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